



Message of the Week

May 21-27, 2003

Presented by Rep. Mike Pence (R-IN)

“There is no higher priority than our national defense.”

- As Memorial Day approaches and we give thanks to the Americans who died in service to our national security, it is important to realize that nothing is more important than national defense.
- Without national defense, nothing else—not our economy, not education, not life itself—is possible. Even with our robust defense in place now, evil-doers still try to penetrate it. Just imagine what they’d try if we let our guard down.
- With this in mind, the House has proposed \$400.5 billion in budget authority—the largest amount in American history—for the Department of Defense and the national security programs of the Department of Energy (DOE).
- The recent lessons of Afghanistan and Iraq teach us that, should our nation have to resort to armed conflict, we should win quickly and decisively, with the fewest casualties possible.
- Quick, decisive victory is only possible with the proper tools and training for our troops. The Republican commitment to national defense provides such necessities.
- The House bill has struck a balance between modernizing our existing forces and investing in so-called transformational capabilities, in order to balance short-term risk with long-term strategy.
- The House bill also increases personnel flexibility at the Department of Defense in ways similar to what was implemented for the Department of Homeland Security. Further, the bill takes steps to reduce the roadblocks to military readiness contained in current environmental laws.
- Despite the strong financial commitment in this year’s defense authorization bill, it is important to note that defense spending under President John Kennedy was 9% of America’s gross domestic product (GDP). Defense spending under President Ronald Reagan was 6% of GDP. In 2004, we will spend just 3.4% of GDP on defense. Republicans will continue to work to increase this number over the long term.
- Meantime, we salute our troops—both current and former—for putting their lives on the line to protect America and to bring freedom to people around the world.